



March 3, 2015

The Honorable Madeline Hughes Haikala
United States District Court
Hugo L. Black U.S. Courthouse
1729 Fifth Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

RE: Proposed Consent Order: Hereford & United States vs. Huntsville City Board of Education

Dear Honorable Hughes-Haikala,

Thank you for your time in helping to resolve the issues we have in Huntsville in our school system. I must first say that I support the efforts to make Huntsville City Schools more equitable for all students. I also appreciate the efforts to improve the continuity of instruction by having elementary schools feed into the same middle school and middle schools feed into the same high school. However, there are some students that have already had to leave their cluster to start new because feeder patterns were not considered in the past. While I think the feeder patterns are needed, I also think they need to be implemented gradually.

Let me share our experience with rezoning. When my daughter entered Kindergarten in 2006, we were rezoned from Farley Elementary School to Chaffee Elementary School. Obviously, that was an easy adjustment for a Kindergartner. However, at that time there was no forethought on rezoning the middle school for our small neighborhood. So when my daughter left Chaffee, she was one of 5 students that went to Challenger Middle when entering 6th grade. The rest of the students at Chaffee went to another school. Middle school is a huge adjustment already. Having to leave her cluster and start over only made it more difficult. My daughter is currently in 7th grade and is being asked to change again in her final year of middle school. The Proposed Consent Order rezones our neighborhood to Whitesburg Middle.

My daughter has already been through a year of being extremely quiet, trying not to stand out, not being engaging and trying to figure out where she fits. After a year and half, she has finally found her place and gained confidence. To start over in 8th grade, she will lose the momentum

she has gained. I am not talking about starting over with friends. For example, she plans to try out for Academic team at Challenger next year. This is only because of the encouragement of the teachers that have come to know her and because she finally has the courage to do so. I fear changing this last year she will take a step back, let anxiety take over and not have time to rebuild the courage to try such things. She is also taking several classes in 7th grade that are prerequisites for what she plans to take at Challenger next year. At this time, it is unknown if these same courses will be offered at the new school. I know that change can bring on new opportunities, but in this case I feel like she will have missed opportunities that will out way the new.

I am writing to make a final plea to allow rising 8th graders (current 7th graders) to remain at their current school for the 2015-2016 school year. Eighth graders are no different than rising seniors. I understand the need for change, but change takes time. What I am proposing will only affect one year of the proposed plan. But this one year is extremely crucial. Eighth grade is such an important academic year to prepare for high school. Grandfathering rising 8th graders will allow students to keep their momentum and thrive academically.

Again, I appreciate your time in listening to all views in this case. I know your time is valuable.

Sincerely,



Trina Weir